

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02
AID-05 MCT-01 OPR-02 OMB-01 /067 W
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, DR
SUBJ: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS

SUMMARY: MINOR VIOLENCE HAS OCCURRED BETWEEN STUDENTS AND POLICE DURING DEMONSTRATIONS PROTESTING INADEQUATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST PUBLIC UNIVERSITY. WHILE THERE IS SOME POPULAR SYMPATHY FOR THE STUDENTS' GOALS, NEITHER THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION NOR THE PUBLIC AT LARGE APPEARS WILLING TO CONDONE VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. APPROXIMATELY 30 STUDENTS AND SEVERAL POLICE SUFFERED INJURIES AND 22 STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED ON FEBRUARY 8 DURING A CLASH BETWEEN STUDENTS OF SANTO DOMINGO'S AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY (UASD) AND NATIONAL POLICE. THE STUDENTS MARCHED OFF THE UASD CAMPUS TO DEMAND INCREASED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY'S BUDGET. CONFRONTATIONS HAVE CONTINUED NEAR THE UASD SINCE THAT TIME. THE UNIVERSITY RECTOR, DR BATISTA DEL VILLAR BLAMED DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PRINCIPAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION, THE DOMINICAN STUDENTS FEDERATION (FED). HE STATED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER FACULTY AND STUDENT GROUPS HAD APPEALED TO FED LEADERS NOT TO TAKE THEIR PROTESTS TO THE STREETS.

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2. DURING PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS HAVE SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE UASD TO MEET WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE AN ECONOMIC CRISIS. UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS RECENTLY CLAIMED TO HAVE ACQUIRED 200,000 SIGNATURES IN A "REFERENDUM" IN SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S DEMANDS. THEY

HAVE ALSO BEEN PUBLICLY SUPPORTED BY A NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES.

3. MORE RADICAL STUDENTS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO TURN TO OPEN DEMONSTRATIONS FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT ON FEBRUARY 6, WHEN ELEVEN BUSLOADS OF UASD STUDENTS TRAVELING TO SANTIAGO, THE COUNTRY'S SECOND LARGEST CITY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTING SIGNATURES WERE HALTED AT A HIGHWAY TOLL STATION BY NATIONAL POLICE AND FORCED TO RETURN TO THE CAPITAL. THE DEMONSTRATIONS ALSO COINCIDED WITH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF A STUDENT PROTESTER ELEVEN YEARS AGO.

COMMENT: UNIVERSITY VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED MARKEDLY IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS. POLITICS AT THE UASD, THOUGH DOMINATED BY RADICAL STUDENT GROUPS, HAS BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO THE CAMPUS. AS A RESULT, THE GODR AUTHORITIES NORMALLY RESPECT THE UNIVERSITY'S TRADITIONAL AUTONOMY. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOTORIOUSLY STINGY IN ALLOCATING FUNDS FOR THE UASD'S ANNUAL BUDGET. MANY DOMINICANS ARE CRITICAL OF THE POLITICIZED ATMOSPHERE OF THE UASD AND PUBLIC REACTION TO THE VIOLENT PROTESTS AT THE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN NEGATIVE, AS IT WAS TO A RECENT SHOOTOUT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL BETWEEN RADICAL STUDENT FACTIONS, THOUGH THERE IS SOME GENERAL SYMPATHY FOR THE ECONOMIC PLIGHT OF THE UNIVERSITY.
HURWITCH

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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